National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Of accessibility and applicability: How heat-related cues affect belief in "Global Warming" versus "Climate Change"

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Abstract:

Research shows that exposure to heat-related cues (e.g., warm temperatures, "fry" and "boil") influences the belief that global warming exists and poses a serious threat to humans. Drawing on social-cognitive principles of concept accessibility and applicability, we hypothesized that these effects may depend on how the issue is framed, given that heat-related concepts are more compatible with "global warming" than "climate change." Exploring this possibility, we asked campus passersby about their belief in global warming or climate change shortly after a real-life unseasonably cold weather event (i.e., snowfall during Spring; Study 1). A controlled Web experiment posed the same questions after participants viewed photographs depicting either unseasonable or seasonable temperatures in their locale (Study 2). Results suggest that priming cold weather decreases belief in "global warming" but not "climate change" among likely climate skeptics (i.e., conservatives, the environmentally unconcerned). Implications for motivated reasoning and the climate debate are discussed.

Source: http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/soco.2014.32.3.217

Resource Description

Communication: ☑

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☑

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure : ☑

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Temperature

Temperature: Extreme Heat

Geographic Feature: ☑

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☑

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact: ☑

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Resource Type: ☑

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☑

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified